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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8249
INFO RUEHEE/ARAB LEAGUE COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHMFIS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 000713

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NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/MARCHESE/HARDING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2012

TAGS: ASEC AMGT PTER CASC LE

SUBJECT: LEBANON: FOLLOW-UP EAC MEETING TO REVIEW SECURITY SITUATION

REF: A. BEIRUT 0710 (DTG 211042Z MAY 07)
1B. STATE 69360 (DTG 211626Z MAY 07) (NOTAL)

Classified By: Jeffrey Feltman, Ambassador. Reason: Sections 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: On May 22 the Embassy Beirut EAC reviewed security developments in Lebanon and corresponding measures to address continuing threats. The Embassy's RSO will stay in close contact with Lebanese Internal Security Forces to evaluate risks to off-compound moves of Embassy Beirut American personnel. The EAC also agreed to recommend that STAFFDEL Weinberg postpone its proposed travel to Lebanon on June 1. End summary.

12. (C) The Ambassador chaired a full session of the Embassy Beirut Emergency Action Committee (EAC) at 0900 hrs. local on May 22. The EAC reviewed security issues including: continued fighting in northern Lebanon on May 21 and especially activity in and around the Nahr el-Barad Palestinian refugee camp near Tripoli; reported low stocks of ammunition on the part of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF); a bombing that took place in the Verdun area of downtown west Beirut at about 2230 hrs. local on May 21; and prospects of further violence. This meeting followed up the previous day's EAC session (ref A). Additional issues discussed included forthcoming CODELS (Price on May 28-29, Leahy on May 31), the current schedule of STAFFDEL Locke which departs Beirut mid-afternoon on May 22, and STAFFDEL Weinberg scheduled for June 1.

13. (C) The EAC agreed that the May 21 bombing in Verdun, following the previous night's bombing in Achrafieh, compares closely, both in tactics and likely motives, with five bombings in and around Beirut in March-April 2005. There was a strong sense among EAC members, but no certainty, that the two bombings of this week were staged by Syrian operatives or Lebanese nationals sympathetic to Syria, that they bear a relationship to pending action in the UN Security Council to adopt a Chapter VII resolution on the international tribunal, and that more similar explosions could follow. The EAC shared a sense, but again no certainly, that the bombings are operationally unrelated to the fighting in the north between Lebanese security forces and the Fatah al-Islam group. (Note: Fatah al-Islam's claim of credit for the bombings, which cannot be verified, was issued after the conclusion of the EAC. End Note.) The EAC agreed that there is a possibility that fighting could spread to other Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, including Ain el-Hilwa, which is the largest camp and is located about 50 kilometers south of Beirut.

14. (C) The Embassy RSO reported that he has been

maintaining close contacts with the Lebanese Internal Security Forces (ISF) with a view to restricting off-compound moves of American personnel to areas of town that present higher than normal risks. It was agreed that the RSO would not reveal to the ISF the specific timing and routes of off-compound moves, given the possibility that such information could leak to the detriment of the security of USG personnel. The RSO will continue his exchanges with the ISF.

¶5. (C) The EAC noted that two high profile CODELS (Price and Leahy) will be visiting Beirut next week. The nature and duration of their programs remain acceptable to the EAC from a security standpoint. By contrast, STAFFDEL Weinberg (ref B) plans to travel to Beirut on June 1, arriving at about 0800 hrs. local and departing at about 2300 hrs. local. The EAC assessed that the lengthy exposure of this STAFFDEL in Beirut, coming closely after two CODELS that will attract press attention, merits postponement of STAFFDEL Weinberg's travel to Lebanon.

FELTMAN